

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 QUITO 002088

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/07/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [EC](#) [UNGA](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH FM PARRA

Classified By: PolChief Erik Hall, for reason 1.4 (b&d).

11. (C) Summary: In an initial office call, the Ambassador thanked FM for the GOE's generous offer of disaster assistance to the U.S., and requested patience while international assistance offers are considered. She urged dialogue with Colombia to resolve important bilateral issues and promoted a bilateral USG-GOE accord on maritime interdiction procedures. Parra vented about differences with Colombia, but expressed grudging commitment to dialogue focused on problem-solving. He claimed to have been misquoted by the press, which sought to "dramatize" the issue of relations with Colombia "to sell newspapers." Despite persistent rumors of his impending departure, Parra gave no sign of leaving his post in the near future. Parra surprisingly declared himself an ally in the search for a negotiated settlement of the Occidental Petroleum case. He will also propose that President Palacio attend a public signing ceremony to mark U.S. development assistance after their return from the UNGA on September 19. End Summary.

12. (U) The Ambassador paid a courtesy call on FM Parra on September 7 in his office. She was accompanied by DCM and PolChief. Parra was alone. He opened the discussion by praising departed Ambassador Kenney's capability and expressed confidence that Ambassador Jewell would have "magnificent" success in Ecuador.

US Grateful for Disaster Relief

13. (U) The Ambassador thanked the GOE for its generous offer to donate bananas with a market value of approximately \$2 million toward hurricane relief. U.S. disaster management experts are trying to match donations with needs, which will take some time, she said. She requested GOE patience to allow us to do so. Parra expressed understanding, and his personal shock and horror at the suffering in the U.S.

"I'm no diplomat"

14. (C) Parra used this phrase several times during the conversation in reference to his personal and frontal approach in dealing with problems, and later in reference to his transparency with the media. "There will always be problems between friends, but it is important to discuss them and deal with them head on," he said, in reference to relations with the U.S. and Colombia. For example, when an Ecuadorian fishing vessel was damaged during U.S. interdiction efforts, he authorized a note to encourage the USG to compensate the boat owner directly. Doing so was not meant as an attack on the USG, but rather a defense of Ecuadorian citizen treatment.

15. (C) The Ambassador agreed that communication was key to good relations, and suggested that a bilateral accord on maritime interdiction procedures could help improve communication. We have proposed such an agreement, which we understand the Ecuadorian Navy has approved and is currently under review by the MFA U/S for Sovereignty Issues. Parra agreed an interdiction agreement would be desirable, but that it had not yet come to his attention.

Media Want to Sell Newspapers

16. (C) Parra admitted that his willingness to talk to the press had gotten him into trouble. He claimed to have been misquoted recently, and denied recent comments reported by Radio Luna on Plan Colombia (alleging 'U.S. intervention' in the conflict) and Ecuador's relations with Colombia (to the effect that 'dialogue is over'). He was incredulous that earlier comments he made about a recent papal statement on corruption in Ecuador had been so misinterpreted to cause some to accuse him of insulting the Pope.

Anti-Colombia Venting

17. (C) Though accusing the press of "dramatizing" Ecuador's differences with Colombia "to sell newspapers," Parra insisted that Ecuador's demands that the GOC eradicate coca crops manually rather than by aerial spraying within 10 km of the border was reasonable. It was entirely within Ecuador's sovereign rights to impose a visa requirement on Colombians,

to make it easier to round up and deport some of the "trouble-makers" among the estimated 500-600,000 Colombians resident in Ecuador. Police believe Colombians are involved in every case of kidnapping within Ecuador's borders, he said.

18. (C) The Ambassador stressed the importance of maintaining dialogue with Colombia on these issues. Public statements about GOC intransigence are unhelpful in this context. Parra said he was committed to dialogue "to reach solutions to our problems," but also said the health effects of continued spraying should be considered at the Hague.

"I am your ally"

19. (C) Parra volunteered that he considered himself a U.S. ally on the issue of caducity of Occidental Petroleum, and agreed with the Ambassador's early public remarks on the importance of finding a negotiated solution. Going to international arbitration was not in the GOE interest, and he had warned President Palacio that politically, the OXY issue would only get harder over time. Better to solve it with a negotiation over royalties (raising from 20% to perhaps 50% at current market prices) and raising the tax rate on oil companies. A new deal with OXY would also help the GOE renegotiate with other companies benefiting from abusive terms. OXY should collaborate with the GOE on a public relations strategy to help convince a skeptical media and public, he said. "The Chinese are highly interested in what becomes of OXY's oil field concessions," he warned.

110. (SBU) Parra said President Palacio would depart for New York September 12 and stay until September 19, returning after giving Ecuador's UNGA address. He planned to recommend that Palacio attend a signing ceremony with the Ambassador to announce \$35 million in USAID development assistance upon his return.

Biographic Notes

111. (SBU) Parra commented that Castro's Cuba is the last communist regime standing. He said he found conditions in Havana to be "a shame" and expressed shock at seeing during a recent visit the "Soviet-era" exclusion of Cubans from developed areas of the city set aside for foreign tourists. He praised the health and education systems, but regretted the export of 20,000 Cuban doctors to Venezuela and the low salaries they receive.

112. (SBU) Parra said his daughter works for Abbott Laboratories in Chicago. He loves visiting her in Chicago, a city he finds more amenable than New York. He owns a condominium in Miami, and worries about the potential for hurricanes. He made several jokes about drinking (whiskey in Puerto Rico, wine in Spain, before the bullfights, which he finds abusive of the bull). Parra declared his "love" (not enchantment) for Spain, having studied law there, and waxed eloquent about the virtues of the siesta. Discussing disasters, he said he is mortally afraid of earthquake tremors in his hometown of Guayaquil.

Comment

113. (C) The atmospherics of the meeting were good, perhaps too good, with Parra attempting to establish rapport by monopolizing the conversation. Despite having the conversation revolve around himself, Parra gave no indication that he intends to depart his post. The press is now speculating on what we heard recently from presidential sibling Gustavo Palacio, namely that Palacio is considering a Parra job swap with Francisco Carrion, now serving as ambassador to Parra's beloved Spain. In this conversation, Parra referred explicitly to his close personal friendship with Palacio, but made no other allusion to his own job security; he has publicly claimed that despite his frequent offers to resign, Palacio has hitherto refused to accept it.

114. (C) Parra's comments on Colombia reflect deep GOE resentment of Colombian inflexibility on the fumigation issue; we do not expect him to let go of the issue, which also bolsters his public standing. His transparent attempt to skirt responsibility for his own unhelpful public comments on Colombia were not convincing to us. The fact is that Parra courts the press, which welcomes and amplifies his nationalist stance, complicating relations with a U.S. ally. Parra's message that "we may have our differences, but I am not your enemy" is disingenuous; we do not consider him a useful ally on any current bilateral issue. We will nevertheless use Parra's professed support for a maritime interdiction agreement to press his staff to deal with our proposed text. We will also continue to attempt to moderate Parra's influence as long as he remains in office.

JEWELL